



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO MEXICAN NATIONALS SENTENCED FOR MARIJUANA CONSPIRACY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that two Mexican nationals were sentenced in federal court today for participating in a conspiracy to distribute 50 kilograms or more of marijuana in Jackson County, Mo. Graves added that approximately 185 pounds of marijuana was hidden inside several decorative concrete pedestals delivered by truck to Kansas City from El Paso, Texas.

Manuel Arturo Pinon, 45, of Mexico, was sentenced by U.S. District Chief Judge Dean Whipple this afternoon to one year and four months federal prison without parole.

Mario Arturo Gutierrez-Perez, 34, of Mexico, was sentenced by U.S. District Chief Judge Dean Whipple this afternoon to two years federal prison without parole.

Pinon and **Gutierrez-Perez** both pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 50 kilograms or more of marijuana in Jackson County from Aug. 26, 2003, to Aug. 28, 2003.

Pinon and **Gutierrez-Perez** were arrested on Aug. 28, 2003, after law enforcement officers were contacted by a security manager at Yellow Freight Trucking company, located at 3500 Booth, in Kansas City, Mo.

Upon contacting law enforcement officers, a Yellow Freight security officer stated that the company was holding several crates that they found to be suspicious in nature and possibly contained illegal drugs. Law enforcement officers responded to the Yellow Freight facility and were notified that the suspicious crates were shipped to Kansas City from El Paso, Texas, via the Yellow Freight Hub in Kansas City, Graves said. A K-9 officer alerted law enforcement officers that the crates contained marijuana.

Shortly after law enforcement officers were advised of the suspicious packages, **Pinon** and **Gutierrez-Perez** arrived at the Yellow Freight facility to retrieve the crates. The five crates contained concrete lawn furniture and weighed between 165 and 555 pounds each, Graves said.

A law enforcement officer, dressed in a Yellow Freight uniform, approached **Pinon** and **Gutierrez-Perez**, who presented the officer identification to retrieve the packages. The two men then approached the front gate of Yellow Freight in a van to retrieve the packages. The law enforcement officer dressed in a Yellow Freight uniform advised the men that they had been approved to pick up the shipment and two of the crates were then loaded into the van.

At that time, law enforcement officers took **Pinon** and **Gutierrez-Perez** into custody and received a search warrant to search the five crates containing decorative concrete pedestals. Law enforcement officers determined that each pedestal contained numerous packages of marijuana.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David DeTar Newbert. It was investigated by the Jackson County, Mo., Drug Task Force, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow